

Frosted Muse

by Sisaat

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Summary: Hiccup is a photographer struggling to make ends meet until he can earn a reputation. He runs into Jack, a homeless teenager freezing in a park, and everything changes for both of them.

1. Frozen

I'm so sorry for starting yet another story when I have a bunch in progress already. I swear I will have something else updated soon.

* * *

><p>The small park was deserted this morning, which suited Hiccup just fine. That meant the freshly fallen snow was still pristine and undisturbed in most places. He carefully took his camera out of the bag he kept his equipment in, played with the settings until he was happy, and set to work hunting for the most beautiful aspects of the frosty landscape and capturing them.<p>

Most in Burgess would have considered it too cold to go outside until you absolutely needed to, but the freezing morning reminded Hiccup of home. It brought a sort of nostalgia he hadn't expected to feel when he left. Not that he was unhappy here, even if he hardly found the world of opportunities he had been told about. He was rather enjoying his life as an occasionally struggling artist.

He was halfway across the park when he noticed the footprints in the snow. This wouldn't have been anything extraordinary except for one thing: the feet that left them were bare. This was no day to be walking around barefooted in the snow. Not that you should ever be walking around barefooted in the snow. It was snow, after all. A little baffled, he followed them.

They led him to a park bench where a youth in a blue sweater with the hood pulled over his head rubbed his frozen feet to restore feelings

into them. The teenager looked up at him and Hiccup froze. Beautiful, with vibrant blue eyes, fair skin, a barely visible fringe of pale hair, lips turned slightly blue from the cold, a dusting of snow on his shoulders, breath misting in front of his face in short, uneven bursts, he fitted so perfectly in the frozen landscape that Hiccup wanted nothing more than to snap a picture.

Thankfully, the less artistic, more rational side of him took over. The kid must be freezing and he very badly needed shelter. And something to warm his feet. Hiccup slung the camera's strap over his shoulder and approached the teenager. The youth gave him a wary look. Hiccup held up his hands to show he meant no harm.

"Hey, uh, are you cold?" It had to be the dumbest question he could have asked and the look of disbelief sent his way confirmed that he wasn't the only one thinking that. "Okay, that was stupid. You're freezing."

"What do you want."

"What do Iâ€"look, you need to get somewhere warm."

"I don't have anywhere warm to go," the teen said, lowering his head to stare at his knees.

"Okayâ€" then come with me. I got warm coffee in my car. You can crash on my couch. We'll find you some shoes."

Hiccup held out a hand in invitation. The teen narrowed his blue eyes at him. Hiccup couldn't say he blamed him. It would have been one thing if he had been offering to drive him to the nearest shelter, but being invited to stay with a stranger was another matter entirely. And telling him that he was really interested in him because of how strikingly beautiful he was would probably just scare him off.

His artistic passion would have to take a back seat, though. If the boy didn't want to come home with him, he'd just have to agree to bring him somewhere else. Probably the hospital. But the shivering teen must have figured that anything was better than freezing to death out here, because he tentatively stretched one leg to put his toes down on the snow-covered ground. Hiccup winced.

"Wait."

The teen paused, eyes filled with confusion. Hiccup crossed the remaining distance to the bench and, slowly so as not to spook him, he slipped one arm behind the boy's back and another under his knees to lift him off the bench. His blue eyes widened and he gripped Hiccup's coat, but he didn't struggle to free himself. He had likely not been too eager to walk on the snow again.

Instead, the shivering boy pressed his cold nose into Hiccup's scarf. His bare feet rubbed against one another for warmth. Hiccup readjusted his grip and made for his car as quickly as he dared go. He didn't want to drop the boy, but he didn't want to let him freeze a second longer than necessary. And his arms were quickly tiring.

He sighed in relief when he reached the car, but getting the door unlocked and open was a bit of a challenge. His arms were shaking by

the time he all but dumped his charge on the back seat. He allowed himself only one second to catch his breath before he reached for the shiny green container that held the coffee he had brought along to warm himself up. He pressed it into the teen's hands.

"Coffee. Careful, it's hot."

"Thanks," the boy said after a moment of hesitation. His fingers struggled to grasp the cap and twist it off and Hiccup realized how numb they must be. He unscrewed it for him. The boy took a careful sip. His eyes closed and he exhaled in relief at the blessed warmth.

"Stay here. I'll be right back."

He closed the door and went to open the trunk instead. Inside, he found a wool picnic blanket that he used when his work kept him outdoor for lunch. He hadn't used it since the beginning of winter, but he was glad he kept it there. He slammed the trunk shut and leaned against it to carefully remove one boot. He pulled off his thick woolen sock, quickly shoved his foot back into the boot and did the same with the other one.

With his blankets and socks in hands, he returned to the teenager slowly sipping on his coffee. He threw the blanket loosely over him, trusting him to make himself comfortable, and helped him pull on the socks.

"They're a bit smelly, but they'll help warm you up."

He didn't waste any time waiting for an answer and closed the rear door to take his own seat behind the wheel. It took a few tries to coax the old car into starting, but Hiccup was used to that and didn't bother cursing at it. Soon enough, he was driving home, the car getting progressively warmer. With his passenger lying on the back seat with his feet behind Hiccup, a quick glance back allowed him to see him relaxing in his spot, the blanket wrapped carefully around his still shivering form.

"So, er, do you have a name?" Hiccup asked a bit clumsily.

"Jack."

"Nice to meet you, Jack. I'm Hiccup."

He threw another glance at Jack to see how he reacted to his unusual name, but the boy didn't even raise his eyes from the coffee. He must be too preoccupied with warming himself to really care about whatever Hiccup was saying to him. The photographer took the hint and the short drive to his apartment building was spent in silence.

* * *

><p>Hiccup let Jack stand on his feet again only once they were past the door of the apartment complex and onto the rough black carpet in the hallway. Jack took a few careful steps after him, walking gingerly on his frozen feet, blanket still wrapped around his shoulders and coffee in his hands. Hiccup winced watching him and wished he had spent more time lifting weights so he could have

carried him longer. Jack didn't complain.<p>

Thankfully, the elevator seemed to be working today. Hiccup didn't know how they would have managed otherwise. As it was, Hiccup was ushering Jack through his apartment door on the fourth floor a few minutes later. The teen surveyed the cluttered main room that served as a kitchen, living room and studio, before taking a startled half step back when a black blur shot into view and stopped abruptly a few feet away, green eyes observing them silently.

"Jack, this is my cat Toothless. Toothless, this is Jack. He's a guest. Be nice." He led Jack to the couch so he could sit down. Toothless followed, staring silently at the stranger. Hiccup hoped he wouldn't cause Jack any grief. "When's the last time you ate?"

"I had a bagel yesterday," Jack answered. He lifted the coffee container back to his lips, but it was empty. He sighed.

"Okay. You need food. And dry clothes. Yours are damp and you'll never get warm in that. Do you want to take a hot shower while I fix something to eat?"

Jack looked up at the offer of a shower with the closest thing to a smile Hiccup had seen on his face so far. The photographer smiled himself, happy to be getting a positive reaction, and helped the hooded teen back up to lead him to the bathroom. He showed him the towels, soap and shampoo and let him have his privacy. When he turned to go find some clothes, Toothless was sitting behind him, staring at him with what he could only call amusement.

"What? I'm just helping someone in need, that's all."

Hiccup could swear the cat rolled his eyes. He ignored him. He strode to the only other room, discarded his coat and scarf on the back of a chair along the way, and set to finding some suitably warm clothes. He grabbed a red tee, a green sweater, black jogging pants, along with clean boxers and thick sock, and rolled it all into a bundle. Back at the bathroom, he could hear the water running. He opened the door a crack without looking in and pushed his bundle on the counter.

"I left you some clothes to change in," he called. "Just leave yours in the bathroom; I'll hang them later."

"Thanksâ€¦" came the hesitant answer.

Food was next on his list. A quick search of his cupboard turned up a can of pea soup. It would do. He dumped it all into a saucepan. While it heated, he took out his phone to check his messages and see how "taking care of a homeless kid" fitted into his schedule. He had a job tomorrow, but he was free today. And all week after that. And none of the people he had contacted about potential jobs had written back.

Hiccup sighed and put the phone away. So, not one of his best week, but that did mean he had the time to work on any unexpected, unplanned projects. That could be good. It also meant he had the day to look after his guest. He stirred the soup, thinking about the possible outcomes of this chance meeting.

The smell wafting out from the saucepan made his stomach growl. The bathroom's door opened just as he was grabbing two bowls. He turned around to tell Jack that lunch was ready, but froze the moment he saw him. The teen had wrapped himself back into the blanket, but that's wasn't what caught Hiccup's attention. Without his hood, the pale hair Hiccup had spotted was now fully visible. Tousled from being towel-dried, it wasn't a light blonde like he had believed, but white as snow. Toothless headbutting his leg made him realize he was staring. Jack wrapped his blanket tighter around himself.

"I made pea soup. I mean, not me, the can made the soup. I mean it's canned pea soup." He cleared his throat. "Just sit on the couch and I'll bring you a bowl."

He tore his gaze from Jack and turned abruptly to fill the two bowl with warm soup. All the while, his mind was spinning with images of his pale guest in frosty landscapes. Hiccup hadn't worked with human subjects often and couldn't afford to hire a professional model, though he had worked with students who needed to fill their portfolios, but he really wanted to convince Jack to allow him to take some pictures. He couldn't pay him much, but he _could _offer hot meals and a couch to sleep on. That had to be worth something.

He returned to the couch where Jack was dozing off and handed him one of the bowls. He dragged a chair nearer so he could sit with him. Toothless jumped on his knees the moment he sat down and stared at Jack intently. Hiccup scratched him under the chin before dipping his spoon into the bowl. Jack seemed to distracted with his warm food to pay attention to the cat.

Hiccup did not breach the subject of his idea during the meal. He didn't want him to think it was a condition for his stay here. Whatever Jack's answer, he wasn't throwing him out until that cold snap was over. Jack fell asleep almost right after placing his empty bowl on the coffee table. Hiccup put his own bowl over it and stroked Toothless's thick fur.

"What do you think, bud?"

He interpreted the cat's purr as approval.

* * *

><p>This idea has been floating in my brain for a long time now and I finally decided to write it. Updates might be a little scattered since I'm working on a bunch of other stories.

2. Slumber

This took way longer than it should have because I kept being distracted by everything shiny, but here it is!

* * *

><p>Even as Hiccup tried hard to concentrate on his work, he kept throwing glances at the figure sleeping on his couch, covered by every spare blanket he had found. He blamed it on the photos he was sorting through, the park covered in a fresh coat of snow reminding

him of their first meeting, of that haunting picture of the pale youth freezing on the bench. His mind went to the possibility of convincing Jack to let him take some pictures as he gazed upon his sleeping face. Sitting on the table next to Hiccup's laptop, Toothless stared at him.<p>

"Stop looking at me like that, bud. I'm not being creepy. I'm watching him for artistic purposes."

Unimpressed, Toothless went back to licking his paw. At least the cat wasn't trying to lie down on his laptop while he worked this time. Hiccup reached over and buried his fingers in the fluffy black fur and glanced back at his sleeping guest. He was pleased to see that Jack had stopped shivering and, though he was still eerily pale, his cheeks had taken a rosy hue.

He shook his head and returned his attention to the photos. He hadn't taken as many as he had hoped, having left the park early due to the circumstances, but at least he had a fair number that turned out really well. That was good, since he was running out of photos to put up on his website and how was he supposed to attract potential clients if he had nothing to show them? His eyes were drawn again to the sleeping teen. He chastised himself. _Don't get your hopes up too high. He hasn't said yes._

It wasn't his most productive day, but when dinner time neared he shut his laptop and called it a day. He needed to cook something. Instant noodles wouldn't do. Jack deserved a real meal and Hiccup would make sure he got one. He looked through his cupboards and his mostly empty fridge, cursing himself for not buying proper food in too long. He eventually found strips of chicken in the freezer along with a bag of frozen veggies. A battered box of mashed potatoes rounded the meal.

It would do for today, but he would go grocery shopping as soon as possible. But now, dinner. He checked the cooking instructions on everything, placed the chicken in his toaster oven, dropped a good amount of vegetables into boiling water and mixed the ingredients to turn a pouch of dry stuff into buttery smelling mashed potatoes. This was turning into a passable meal, the kind normal people ate all the time.

He threw several glances at the still sleeping teen while he got the meal ready, not sure if he should wake him up or set aside a portion for him to eat later. Jack had been dead to the world for hours and Hiccup didn't want to disturb his rest. He might not have had the chance to sleep somewhere soft, warm and mostly quietâ€"and Hiccup had taken pains to make as little noise as possibleâ€"in a long time, but, at the same time, he needed to eat. A bagel yesterday and a bowl of pea soup today weren't nearly enough, and who knew how much he had been eating before that. The couch wasn't going anywhere.

As it turned out, he was agonizing over this for nothing. When the scent of the almost-ready food filled the small apartment, Jack stirred. He shifted under his blankets, rubbed his eyes, opened them a crack before squeezing them back shut and pressing his hands over them. It took him a few tries before he could keep those icy blue eyes open. He directed a sleepy stare at Hiccup.

The photographer watched as confusion and mild panic flashed across

them before being replaced by a more calm, but guarded look. Jack still wasn't at ease here and Hiccup couldn't blame him. He knew nothing of the man who had taken him in, after all. But that look was tinged by a hint of interest. He propped himself up on one elbow and sniffed the air.

"Dinner's just about ready," Hiccup said. "Hungry?"

"Yeah..." he mumbled. There's was a certain wounded pride to the way Jack acted, reluctant to admit he wanted the food Hiccup was offering. Pride may be the only thing he had left, so Hiccup didn't begrudge him that.. "Can I use your bathroom?"

"Uh, sure."

Jack pushed most of the covers off, but kept the picnic blanket around his shoulders. He stood, held his checkered cloak tightly around himself and glided to the bathroom with a sort of princely grace, the blanket billowing behind him. Hiccup stood next to the oven holding a potato-covered spoon and watched him go with his mouth hanging open. He shook himself and grabbed some plates.

At least Jack's feet didn't seem to pain him anymore. Or, at least, not as much as they had earlier. That was good. He had been worried ever since he had seen the footprints in the hoped it hadn't been too late to help, that warmth and food would be enough for Jack to recover and that he wouldn't need to be taken to the hospital. He was more afraid of that than he cared to admit.

He worried for Jack's health and didn't want it to come to that, of course, but that wasn't the only reason why the prospect made his guts tie themselves into a knot. A small, selfish part of him that was getting increasingly loud worried that he would lose him if he left him in the doctors's care. He wanted to hang on to this winter boy. But what reason did Jack have to stay other than that he was currently providing him with shelter and a warm meal?

By the time Jack walked out of the bathroom, his blanket still around wrapped around himself and his feet barely touching the ground with each step, Hiccup had filled their plates and laid them on the table. He gestured at one of the seat for Jack to sit. Toothless jumped onto the table and sniffed at Hiccup's plate. The photographer gave the cat a warning glance.

"Don't even think about it, bud. You got your own food in your bowl."

Toothless mewled, swish his tail and sat down in front of one of the empty seats, acting for all the world like he was having dinner with them. That brought a small smile out of Jack, but it dropped when he noticed Hiccup staring. He padded over to the chair and dropped down into it without letting go of the picnic blanket.

"Are you still cold?" Hiccup asked.

"No."

Without looking at him, Jack took his fork, scooped up some mashed potatoes and started eating. Hiccup's shoulders slumped. This wasn't looking up. He stifled a sigh and joined the two at the table. They

ate in awkward silence, with Toothless looking from one boy to the other as if expecting them to start talking any moment. Jack occasionally raised his head to look back at the cat, but he avoided meeting Hiccup's eyes. At least he ate with appetite.

"So, uh," Hiccup tried, "I don't think I properly introduced myself. I'm Hiccup Haddock. I'm a professional photographer."

At first, Jack only grunted in answer and shoved some more carrots in his mouth. But then, he lifted his head and looked at him. "That's why you were at the park?"

"Yes," Hiccup answered, happy to be getting some interest. "I went there because the park is beautiful after a snowfall."

"It is," Jack agreed.

Silence fell over them again, but this time it was more comfortable. Hiccup decided against talking to Jack about his offer right now. As eager for an answer as he was, he preferred to let him warm up to him first. It would make it more likely that the answer would be "yes". Jack, for his part, was content to clean his plate. When he was done, he seemed to remember that he had been sleeping. He yawned, rubbed his eyes and looked back at the couch longingly.

"You can go back to sleep."

Jack looked back at him, eyes half-closed and seeming ready to fall asleep right there. "Do you want me to help with the dishes?"

"I'll be fine."

Jack didn't insist. He gathered his blanket back around himself, stood, shuffled back to the couch, buried himself under the pile of cover and closed his eyes. Hiccup rested his chin on his hand and contemplated the sleeping teen, losing track of his surroundings until he felt whiskers against his arm. Looking down, he saw that Toothless had taken advantage of his inattention to eat his last piece of chicken. He sighed.

* * *

><p>Evening was quiet. Hiccup sat with a book with only a lamp on to keep the room dim, Toothless purring on his knees. Jack slept peacefully, looking so very childlike in his slumber that it struck Hiccup that someone should probably be taking care of him. He shouldn't be living on his own out there in the streets. He wondered how old he was. He looked older when he was awake and Hiccup had no way to know which was closer to the truth. But he did know that he was staring again.<p>

Hiccup closed his book and ran a hand through his hair. It might be time for him to sleep as well. It was getting late and he was certainly not going to do anything productive. He placed the book back on the coffee table and nudged Toothless to get him off his knees. His feline companion purred and refused to move. The purring turned to an offended mewl when Hiccup stood anyway. Toothless tumbled to the ground, landed on his feet and walked away with all the dignity of a cat pretending he hadn't just embarrassed himself. Hiccup smirked.

He changed into his sleeping clothes and was in the middle of brushing his teeth when he heard noise outside the bathroom that didn't sound like Toothless. He cracked the door open and saw, just like he expected, Jack getting up from his couch. _Of course you're waking up just as I'm going to sleep. Just perfect. _Jack looked around, seeming a little lost until he spotted him. Hiccup spit the toothpaste in the sink, rinsed his mouth and walked out of the bathroom.

"Slept well?"

"Yeah." Still wrapped in the picnic blanket, Jack took a few hesitant steps to him. He chewed on his lip, opened his mouth, closed it and looked down at his feet, shifting in place. "I. uh, I wanted to thank you. For, you know, bringing me here. And for the food. And the dry clothes. And, uh, everything."

It was Hiccup's turn to look down. His cheeks heated up a little. "You're welcome." Jack shuffled a few steps closer and looked up at him with a mix of expectation and reluctance. He seemed to be waiting for him to do something. Hiccup cleared his throat. "I, uh, sorry I'm going to sleep just when you're waking up. I..." he wracked his brain for something the teen could keep himself busy with, "got a Nintendo DS next to the TV, with a bunch of old games. You can play if you want to. And there's some magazines lying around..."

For reasons he couldn't understand, his words seemed to surprise Jack. He blinked, blushed and looked away. "Okay. Thanks."

"Is everything okay? Do you need anything?"

Jack turned around abruptly and went to look for the games Hiccup had told him about. "No, nothing."

Hiccup tried really hard to understand what just happened, but he came up with nothing. "Okay, what am I missing?"

"Nothing," Jack repeated. He hesitated a moment, then looked back at him with a little smile. Hiccup wanted to see more of that smile. "I don't need anything. Thanks."

"Okay, just... I'll be in my room if you need me. There's Hot Pockets and some leftover mashed potatoes if you're hungry."

That little smile widened, giving him a peek of white teeth. "Thanks."

Hiccup smiled back. His knees felt weak and he was a little light-headed. Time for bed. He still didn't know what had just happened, but Jack seemed fine for now and that would have to do if he wasn't willing to talk. Toothless followed him to his room and Hiccup left the door open just enough to allow him back out. He curled up under the covers with Toothless purring against his chest, but he couldn't fall asleep. Instead, he replayed the day in his head.

It was embarrassing how long it took him to catch on, but he did, eventually. He sat up suddenly in his bed, much to Toothless's annoyance. "Oh. Oh. I've been such an idiot," he whispered. He fell

back on the bed. His weight made the poor cat bounce and Toothless decided he had enough. He jumped off the bed and exited the room. Hiccup barely noticed.

He had been staring at Jack, a lot, since the moment they met. The boy would have to be blind not to notice. And he probably thought that Hiccup had brought him here with the hope of getting something from him. He wasn't wrong on that one, but he had apparently mistaken what it was Hiccup wanted. He slapped his hand over his eyes and groaned. Maybe he should have talked about it over dinner after all.

Restless, he got out of bed, walked to the partly open door and looked out. Jack knelt next to the TV and looked through his games, the picnic blanket fallen from his shoulders. He turned his head and smiled when Toothless approached him, lifting one hand to pet the black cat. It relieved Hiccup to see how much more relaxed and at ease he was, how unguarded that smile was. He returned to his bed, reassured.

_I'll talk to him tomorrow. No need to remind him of that moment of awkwardness right now. _He closed his eyes and tried to sleep. Jack's smile wouldn't leave his mind even after he drifted off.

* * *

><p>Just a little note (and I'm sorry if you're reading several of my ongoing stories, you'll likely see it more than once): I got several stories in progress at the moment and I can't be working on all of them at the same time. So please don't tell me to update this or that story soon. I get a lot of these message on different fics and, while I appreciate that people enjoy my work, I'll be updating them in the order that I want to update them and I try to alternate between them, so I'll be updating a different one next. Please be understanding. (btw, I know I haven't received any reviews telling me to update on this particular fic, but I'm putting this note to all of my ongoing ones)
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End
file.